

Pangbourne (pop 3000)
Berkshire

In May 2004 Irish Travellers
bought 15 acres for £50,000

on Riverview Road

(houses there cost £500,000)

Planning applied for

5

Subject: Pangbourne

Date: Fri, 02 Jul 2004 05:57:46 +0100

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This crappy piece appeared in Monday's daily mail. The reporter appears to be a member of an ethnic minority. He seems to like reporting on Traveller related cases, and this is not his first. His e-mail is a.dawar@daily mail.co.uk

By Anil Dawa

NESTLING in the heart of the countryside which inspired The Wind In The Willows, it is an idyllic spot reflected in seven-figure house prices.

But the Berkshire village of Pangbourne, last home of author Kenneth Gra-hame, is seeing a disturbing new chapter in its history.

It is the latest rural com-munity to have its peace destroyed by an invasion of travellers. Forty of them have bought 15 acres, gravelled over a meadow and turned it into a caravan park.

The land, which is believed to have cost the Irish trav-ellers around £50,000, was

part of an £11 million estate sold off recently. It backs on to Riverview Road, where houses cost anything from £500,000 to more than £1million. The first three caravans arrived at the hillside site at

the end of May. Within a week, nine more arrived, fresh off the boat from Ireland.

By then, the travellers had created hard standings for their caravans and built corral-style wooden fences for their horses, despite not having sought planning permission.

Two applications have now been submitted, to cover the work done and allow construc-tion of a road through the site.

The applications, which could still be rejected by the planning committee, were incorrectly completed and the council is still trying to get the correct information. Estate

agent Dudley Singleton said the 3,000-strong community would not take the invasion lying down.

'This will inevitably bring down the area. We wouldn't mind if they lived by the same laws as everyone else. As a piece of PR this is very bad for the travellers.

By choosing such a promi-nent village they have taken a double-barrelled shotgun and blown both feet off. We can't just let this happen. Aggres-sion will be met with aggres-sion. The law will be enforced.'

Susie Kemp, Tory councillor for West Berkshire Council, said: 'I represent decent peo-ple who abide by the laws of the land. We don't mind wel-coming in new members to the community but they have to live by the rules.

'These people cause noise nuisance and environmental nuisance. Why should people who pay their taxes have to put up with the problems they cause? They contribute

nothing to the community. Assuming the application is rejected, my understanding is that the caravan site will stay there until the appeal process is

finished.

'These people know all the intricacies of planning law and do all they can to frustrate progress and elongate their stay.'

The invasion follows similar incidents at Cottenham, Cambridgeshire, and Ecking-ton, Worcestershire.

At the Pangbourne site, spokesman James Quinn said they were staying within the law. 'We have made our applications and we will have to see how it turns out.'

Standing among shiny caravans and four-wheel-drive vehicles, Mr Quinn said he and his extended family had come to England to escape the escalating drug problem in their homeland.

'This is the first time we have been in England. We bought the land because it is big enough for what we need

and to have our horses on.' Homeowner Dick McCall can see the site from his back garden. 'You have to think about your house price,' he said. 'If things get worse I am sure it will devalue. I am mindful about moving because when you have made an investment you have to watch it.'

Kenneth Grahame drew on childhood memories spent playing alongside the Thames near Pangbourne for *The Wind In The Willows*, and moved to the village when he retired. He died in his cottage, the Old Forge, in 1932.

His friend, the artist E H Shepard, also drew upon Pangbourne's riverside views for inspiration when he was asked to illustrate the adventures of Ratty, Mole and Toad.

Enjoying a pint yesterday at the riverside Swan Inn, a 64-year-old homeowner said wistfully: 'This is a beautiful place. There were no rubbish dumps in *The Wind In The Willows*.'